

Contact: Mark Lambert

Lambert Media
225-937-8113
lambertmedia@eatel.net

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**Louisiana Good Roads and
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www.louisianagoodroads.org

Press Release

BR's congested roads force drivers to pay "congestion tax"

BATON ROUGE – Baton Rouge drivers are wasting more than \$1,000 a year sitting in traffic, partly because Louisiana has failed to adequately fund transportation, a transportation advocate said Monday.

The recently released Urban Mobility Report 2010 from the Texas Transportation Institute (http://tti.tamu.edu/documents/mobility_report_2010.pdf) lists Baton Rouge as having the worst traffic congestion in the nation among mid-sized cities. The report says Baton Rouge drivers waste 37 hours and 30 gallons of gasoline every year because of congested roads, costing each driver an extra \$1,003 a year. New Orleans-area drivers didn't fare much better. The report says traffic congestion costs those drivers an extra 31 hours and 23 gallons of gasoline every year, costing each driver an extra \$772 a year.

Ken Perret, president of the Louisiana Good Roads and Transportation Association, said the wasted time and money amounts to a "congestion tax."

"Time spent in traffic is time and money wasted, and today Louisiana can put a dollar figure on that congestion tax," Perret said. "Our traffic problems didn't happen overnight; we shortchanged our system for years to get to this point."

Louisiana's primary means of funding transportation projects is through a state tax on gasoline. That tax has remained at \$.20 per gallon since the late 1980s, when voters approved a four-cent increase to fund the Transportation Infrastructure Model for Economic Development (TIMED) program. Because the fuel tax is based on the quantity of gasoline sold (not the price of the gasoline), the revenues available for transportation projects remain flat while costs have soared with years of inflation.

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“You cannot build and maintain a 21st Century transportation system on a 1980s allowance.” Perret said. “Unless our political leaders address this funding issue, drivers will have to continue paying the congestion tax.”

Ironically, political leaders’ historical opposition to raising tax revenues to fund transportation is costing drivers much more than adjustments to the fuel tax or other revenue additions would have cost. The \$1,003 a year in congestion tax is more than ten times the amount of money the average driver pays in state gasoline taxes in one year.

“Good Roads cost money; poor roads cost more,” Perret said. “Wouldn’t Louisiana’s drivers rather pay less now for better roads than sit in traffic, wasting time and even more money?”

The report says Baton Rouge’s traffic woes are made worse because of ongoing road construction. Perret noted that most of the major road construction in the area was financed by state surplus funds or by federal stimulus funds, not regular transportation funds.

“Good Roads supports the use of those funds to improve our system,” Perret said. “But our future mobility and economic development prospects demand that we improve our main source of funding for transportation.”

Louisiana Good Roads and Transportation Association (www.louisianagoodroads.org) is a statewide, non-profit organization dedicated to fostering and promoting a program of planning, design, construction and maintenance of an adequate transportation system, sufficiently financed, which will conveniently and safely serve the transportation needs of the people of Louisiana.